

A Providers Perspective: The benefits of electronic medication management.



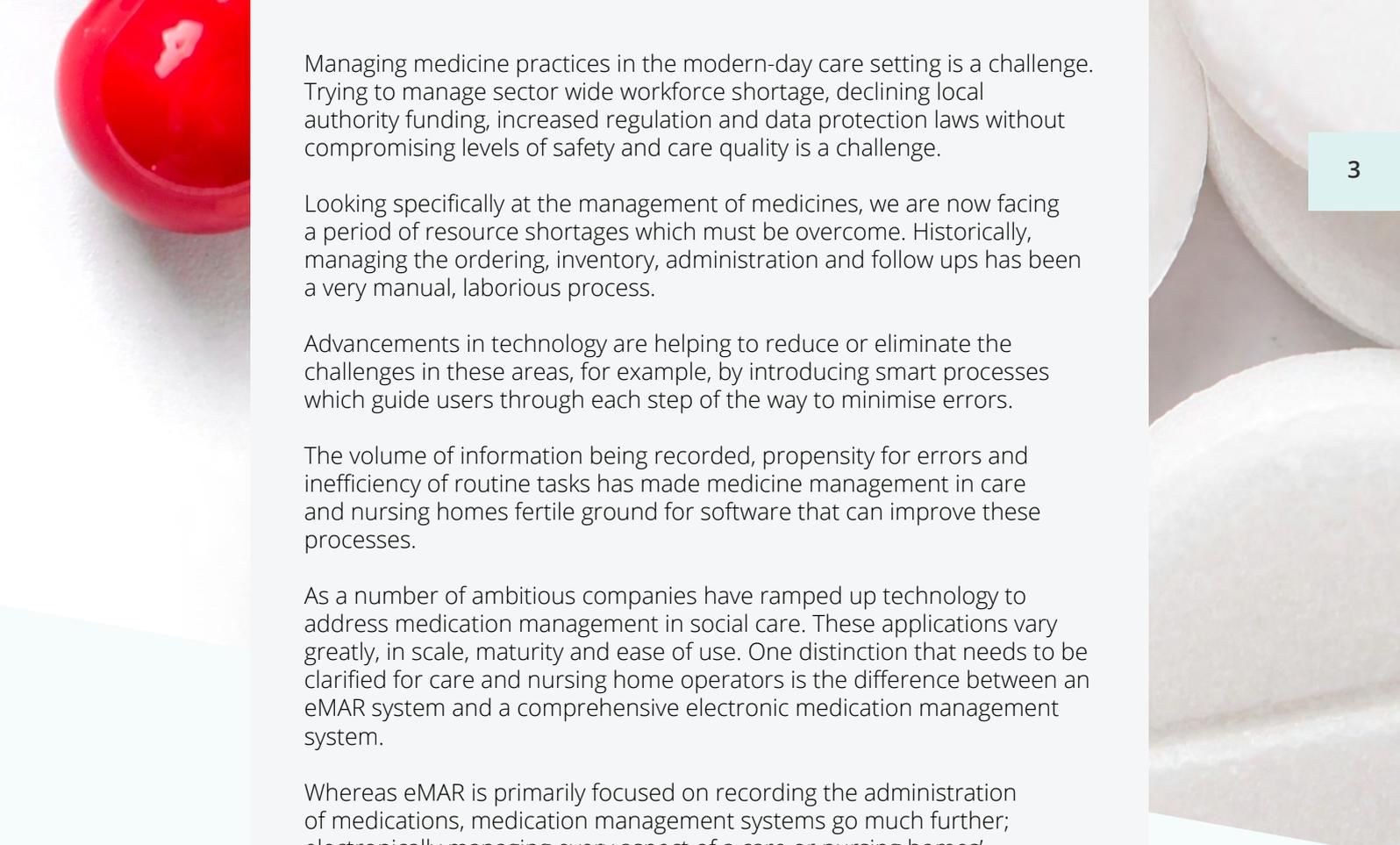
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Craig Flood

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Managing medicine practices in the modern-day care setting is a challenge. Trying to manage sector wide workforce shortage, declining local authority funding, increased regulation and data protection laws without compromising levels of safety and care quality is a challenge.

Looking specifically at the management of medicines, we are now facing a period of resource shortages which must be overcome. Historically, managing the ordering, inventory, administration and follow ups has been a very manual, laborious process.

Advancements in technology are helping to reduce or eliminate the challenges in these areas, for example, by introducing smart processes which guide users through each step of the way to minimise errors.

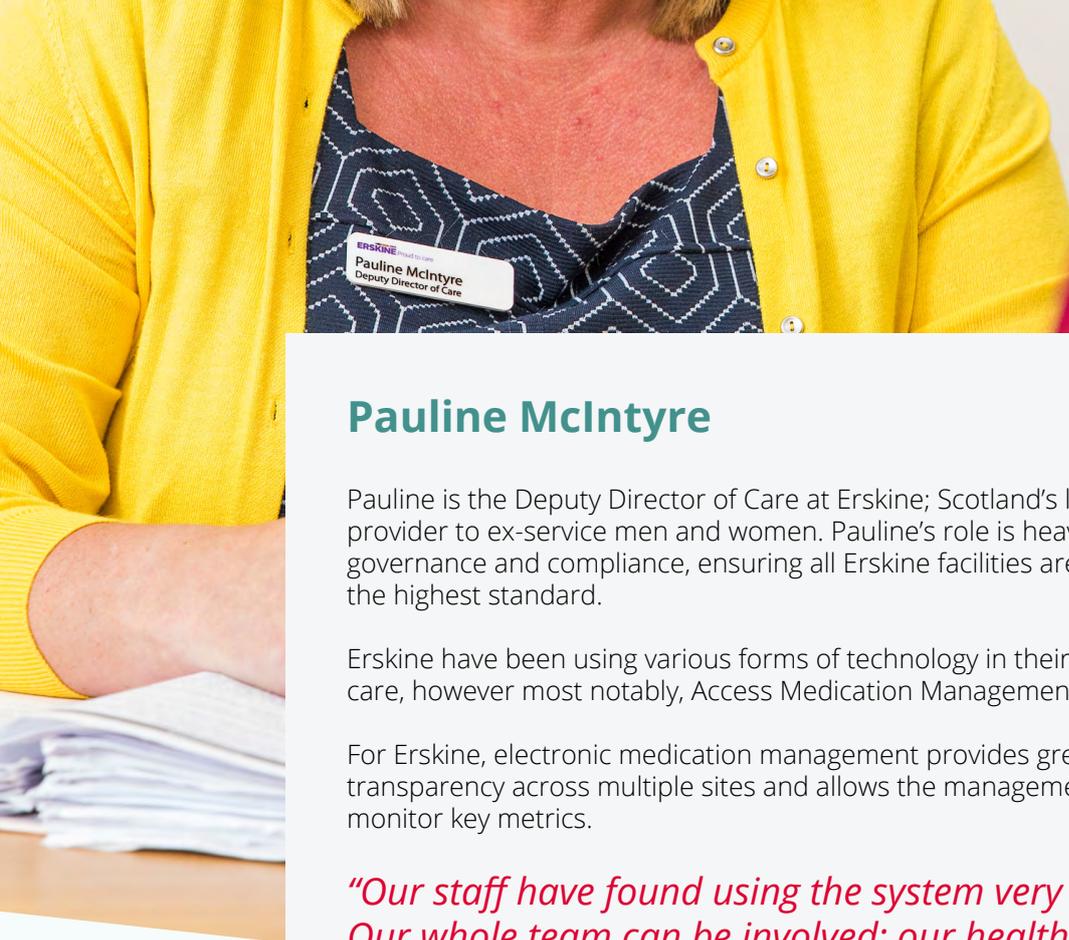
The volume of information being recorded, propensity for errors and inefficiency of routine tasks has made medicine management in care and nursing homes fertile ground for software that can improve these processes.

As a number of ambitious companies have ramped up technology to address medication management in social care. These applications vary greatly, in scale, maturity and ease of use. One distinction that needs to be clarified for care and nursing home operators is the difference between an eMAR system and a comprehensive electronic medication management system.

Whereas eMAR is primarily focused on recording the administration of medications, medication management systems go much further; electronically managing every aspect of a care or nursing homes' medicines, from ordering and stock management, to administering, to reporting. Electronic Medication Management is focused on the entire medication cycle a home operates with.

To bring these new developments to light, Access hosted a panel debate with different care providers to discuss their use of an electronic medication management system and to discuss the benefits and challenges they have encountered and any guidance they would offer to fellow care providers from their experiences.





Pauline McIntyre

Pauline is the Deputy Director of Care at Erskine; Scotland's largest care provider to ex-service men and women. Pauline's role is heavily invested in governance and compliance, ensuring all Erskine facilities are operating to the highest standard.

Erskine have been using various forms of technology in their provision of care, however most notably, Access Medication Management.

For Erskine, electronic medication management provides greater transparency across multiple sites and allows the management team to monitor key metrics.

"Our staff have found using the system very helpful. Our whole team can be involved; our healthcare professionals, advanced nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists; they all input. Which means when the notes are there, everybody is involved and can review the information ultimately improving the residents care."

Not only is technology improving the documentation available to Pauline and Erskine, but it is also decreasing time spent on documenting care, ultimately increasing time spent with residents.

How have the regulators responded to your use of technology and ultimately, has that improved your inspection results?

"Our use of the system has been mentioned by our inspector. Using this technology allows us to capture rich data that we would have otherwise been able to record. By doing so we are adding further depth to the data we are capturing, and has led to us receiving sector leading inspection results".

Erskine have become industry leaders when it comes to the provision of care, partnering with other national care providers to promote best practice within the sector.





Richard Hawes

Richard is the CEO of Elizabeth Finn Homes. Coming from a nursing background, as a CEO, Richard has a unique perspective of the business as his grassroots experience comes from nursing. Richard has always been forward thinking with technology and a tool was needed to drive the group forward in the modern day care setting.

To do this, Richard put together a user group of within the business to fully scope the project and understand what needs to be implemented to benefit all areas of the business. He understood that this project shouldn't be managed with a top down approach, instead ensuring carers and nurses were heavily involved from the outset.

For Richard, implementing a tool like this goes beyond time saving. It goes towards enabling the workforce with greater responsibilities. He goes on to say:

"I think where it has really helped us is around the extended role of the care worker so we've started looking at our senior carers extending their role, and that's not about replacing nurses its about letting

nurses do what they're best at which isn't always pushing the drugs trolley around. Now we have the flexibility in our homes to say 'OK now we're letting the senior carers do the drugs round'.

Richard continues to discuss the benefits they've seen at Elizabeth Finn. Notably being how it is encouraging the workforce to stay on with the organisation. Mainly because the senior carers are given responsibilities they wouldn't usual be given, which in turn allows the nurses to focus on areas in which they're greater skilled.

"In the homes which have been inspected since rolling out the technology, there has been positive remarks towards the technology. We have even had another of our homes become outstanding since. Our latest inspector was a pharmacy inspector, rather than a generic one, and they said that they are confident that we, as a care provider, are on it as he can see the audit trails and the systems in place in the background to prevent residents receiving an incorrect medication".

Elizabeth Finn Homes are continuing to improve their processes, empowering their workforce and ultimately improving the care their residents receive.





Mandy Thorn

Mandy is a huge advocate when it comes to the use of technology in the social care space and has fully embraced the digital journey at Marches Care. Mandy knew that technology was the future, but struggled implementing the correct system to start with.

She doesn't shy away from the fact they spent, and wasted, thousands of pounds of software that wasn't right for the business. Similarly to Richard, Mandy found the previous issues they had stemmed from using a top-down approach.

It was soon after, however, that Mandy realised this was a project which needed buy-in from the care staff initially. Similarly to Elizabeth Finn Home's experience, Mandy formed a user group of carers and nurses to identify the needs and wants of the team.

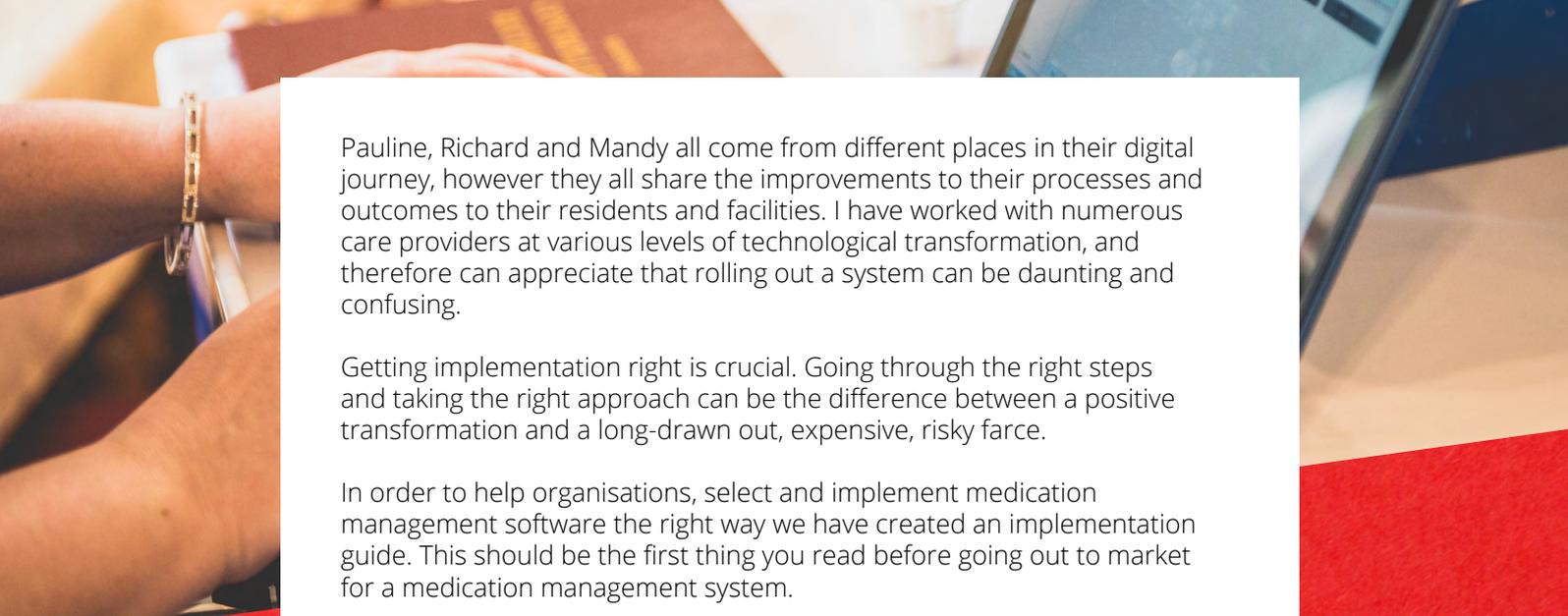
Putting this group together provided a holistic view of the business's needs and then enabled them to review the various suppliers available on the market. Having done this, they soon settled on **Access Medication Management** due to its enhanced capabilities and integration with the Access care planning software. This approach proved far more effective and has led to the success they see today.

When asked about the improvements that have been made since bringing technology on-board Mandy said:

“Using tech is great, but the main focus should always be on how it is improving the lives of the residents. People are always focused on the regulators, but another instance in which the technology plays a huge role is in maintaining relationships between a resident, who may live with complex dementia and have received care at home for a number of years and their family. The families are often, quite rightly, concerned with the level of care and engagement their loved one receives. By using the system, and the right measures being put in place, we can actually give the families access to see exactly what interactions and care their loved one receives. For us, this has been a huge benefit and really puts the families mind at ease”.

Mandy and the team at Marches care have been huge champions of using technology, especially electronic medication management since the offset. Having tried systems in the past, it wasn't until other parts of the business were brought in to assess the systems available, and the right support was given, until they succeeded in rolling out an effective system and they've been reaping the benefits ever since.





Pauline, Richard and Mandy all come from different places in their digital journey, however they all share the improvements to their processes and outcomes to their residents and facilities. I have worked with numerous care providers at various levels of technological transformation, and therefore can appreciate that rolling out a system can be daunting and confusing.

Getting implementation right is crucial. Going through the right steps and taking the right approach can be the difference between a positive transformation and a long-drawn out, expensive, risky farce.

In order to help organisations, select and implement medication management software the right way we have created an implementation guide. This should be the first thing you read before going out to market for a medication management system.

Moving towards a medication management system does require work. You need to invest time. But as our contributors, along with care and nursing home operators across the UK will testify, that investments will pay off massively, making your care or nursing homes safer, more legally and data secure and more efficient.

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Established in 1991, The Access Group, with an enterprise valuation of £1 billion, employs more than 1,500 staff.